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INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 0541
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 0163
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 0249
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 0556
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0175

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 002205

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [UNSC](#) [GR](#) [CY](#) [IS](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: BAKOYIANNIS HEADS TO MIDDLE EAST IN LISTENING MODE

REF: A) ATHENS 2178 B) STATE 137427 C) USUN 1537

Classified By: DCM TOM COUNTRYMAN. REASON: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) DCM met with Ambassador Kostas Chalastanis, Director of FM Bakoyannis' cabinet, on August 22 just prior to their departure for Cyprus, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel. Delivering ref a points, DCM emphasized that, when Greece assumed the UNSC presidency in September, it would immediately face a number of hot-button issues: implementation of UNSC 1701, UNIFIL staffing and deployment, Iran's nuclear ambitions. A proposed UNSC Ministerial on the Palestinian issue could overload the agenda and, in the U.S. view, would do little to advance the peace process. FM Bakoyannis' visit to the region would be an important opportunity for Greece to review the concerns of key players. Chalastanis agreed; a major reason for the trip was to listen to views from all sides. For example, Greece was skeptical of the Arab League idea of a possible UNSC Ministerial on the Palestinian issue and wanted to hear from the Israelis and others on this point. Chalastanis stressed that during its UNSC presidency, Greece would coordinate with the U.S. Chalastanis was also careful to note that FM Bakoyannis would not meet with any Hamas officials; she was meeting the Palestinian president in Amman.

¶2. (C) Based on Embassy Beirut's excellent reporting, DCM also described latest developments and urged that Bakoyannis pay close attention to urgent issues in Lebanon:

- the need for UNIFIL deployment to the airport and seaports;
- LAF's need for equipment, ammo and parts;
- the need for effective donor coordination.

Chalastanis took careful note of these issues.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Chalastanis took careful note of our points, particularly on implementation of 1701 and UNIFIL (the GOG's formal decision on the nature of its participation, reported septel, had just been taken). But his characterization of FM Bakoyannis' hastily-constructed visit as an opportunity to listen to regional leaders is only part of the story. FM Bakoyannis likely sees the upcoming UNSC presidency as an opportunity to raise her profile with Greek voters, particularly on events taking place in the region. However, Bakoyannis clearly recognizes the need to tread carefully; her decision to avoid a visit to Damascus has already been criticized by some in the opposition.
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